

EXECUTIVE BUDGET MESSAGE

(as submitted with the Executive's Proposed Budget)



To Brown County Residents:

It is my honor to present the 2015 Brown County Executive Budget. The proposed budget continues down the path of fiscal responsibility to ensure the County's long term financial viability and affordability for area residents.

In addition, through long-term planning initiatives, departments are better aligned to address future issues now and help balance requests for limited resources to ensure the right investments are made to enhance our area's quality of life. I have outlined several budget initiatives for your review and consideration.

Budget Highlights:

Tax Cut & Levy Reduction

The proposed budget reduces the equalized tax rate by 2.11 percent and lowers the 2015 levy by \$100,000. Since 2011, the overall levy has been reduced by over \$1.5 million dollars. Those are dollars we are putting back into the pockets of hard working families and businesses.

Debt Reduction

General fund debt continues to decline by using the simple strategy of paying off more than we borrow. In 2015, we are eliminating debt principal by \$4.5 million. Since taking office in 2011, we have paid off more than \$45.2 million in total debt principal. By planning wisely, we are able to make the necessary investments in our transportation and communication infrastructure, investments that are critical to public safety.

Job Creation

Since I took office, there are 5,824 more jobs in Brown County. In 2015, we will continue to focus on smart investments that grow our economy including roads, waste recycling, rail, airport and port.

We will also continue to partner with Advance to assist in our economic initiatives. Since 2011, they have helped create and retain over 2,000 jobs in Brown County through their manufacturing incubator, culinary kitchen, loan programs, and specialized assistants. In addition, we will continue the journey to develop our Resource Recovery Park, Airport Commerce District, and Business and Research Park.

Employee Centered Health Insurance

Health Insurance for the County was projected to increase by roughly 11.3 percent, or \$1.5 million dollars. We know that to attract and retain high quality employees, we need to keep health insurance affordable, and that's why we are focusing on an employee-centered insurance philosophy of Choose Well, Use Well, and Live Well. The principles are simple. By becoming an informed consumer, actively managing your health and living a healthier lifestyle, County employees and taxpayers both win by paying less. This budget creates a health plan that helps accomplish this.

Pay for Performance & Compensation

We will again invest in the County's greatest assets – its employees, through a 1 percent base and a 1 percent performance pay raise. The pay for performance helps reward the best public servants, while providing a framework so others can improve to provide outstanding service to internal and external customers.

Public Safety & Enforcement

Key to a strong quality of life is making sure people feel safe. To this end, the Sheriff and the County are recommitting to the fight against drugs by levy funding a Drug Taskforce Officer and an additional Sheriff Patrol Officer to help make our streets safer. The County is also taking a hard line against child sex offenders by funding two child sex crime analysts to build upon the great successes the Sheriff's Office has achieved in finding and arresting child predators.

In addition, this budget levy funds the currently contracted Assistant District Attorney and clerical position to deal with increased prosecutions. We will again call on the state to fully fund Assistant District Attorneys at a level necessary to protect our citizens.

The budget also adds an additional sanitarian to help offset the workload for all sanitarians, so they can provide better customer service and more aggressively address quality of life issues that affect our lives.

Community Services

To be successful, Brown County engages with community partners to help carry out its social service mission and State-chartered services. To achieve this, the County will spend over \$38 million to engage community partners in carrying out these initiatives.

The proposed budget makes an additional investment in the Birth to Three program by increasing funding by 2 percent to ASPIRO, Cerebral Palsy, Rehab Resources and St. Vincent's. In addition, ASPIRO and New Curative will receive a 2 percent funding increase for long-term care services. The County also replaced one-time money of \$115,000 to maintain Family Services for programs that help victims of child abuse and to provide safe housing for the mentally ill.

Community Partnerships

Abundant recreation and family entertainment opportunities are a key component to the strong quality of life we enjoy. We want to encourage friend groups, like the Friends of the New Zoo, who are willing to invest in some of the key assets in our community. The 2015 budget does not specify a match for any specific organization; however, I will be focusing a portion of the Executive Budget as a match to those organizations that help benefit our County.

Community Survey

\$15,000 is dedicated in the County Board's budget for a community-wide survey that will help guide the Board's long term policy initiatives as we plan for our County's future.

Concerns on the Horizon:

Family Care: As we move forward, we need to be mindful of future budget issues. As Family Care roles out in 2015, we will see significant reductions in our revenues over the next several years.

911 Center: The 2015 budget includes an increase of \$370,000 for preventative communication maintenance of our vital link to the public and all emergency services. By 2016, the total cost will be \$766,000, with additional incremental increases each year thereafter.

Treasurer: Due to historically low interest rates, less revenue is earned on cash balances available for investment so the County must replace this shortfall by adding \$200,000 to the levy in 2015. In total, the County has dedicated over \$1.2 million to offset this shortfall in the past few years. We are hopeful the market is beginning to recover and this trend will be reversed.

Clerk of Courts: An increase of \$165,000 levy dollars in 2015 is dedicated to cover the shortfalls in Guardian Ad Litem expenses and revenues. Proactively, my administration will work with the department to help control costs and find inefficiencies.

Community Treatment Center: To avoid future budgetary shortfalls, we will continue the process of reorganization to maximize efficiencies while providing high quality care. Human Services will also put better financial controls in place and examine billing practices to capture more revenue and investigate complimentary programs and services to provide greater revenue streams that make sense for our residents.

ADRC: In 2013 they had a savings of \$500,000 by leveraging additional state, federal and community partnerships to build reserves. This budget reduces by 50% the amount Brown County contributes to ensure we do not overtax our citizens for the valuable services provided. We will continue to monitor the situation so ADRC can provide needed services without over-taxation.

Library: The Library is using \$138,553 in fund balance to continue their current operations. While I oppose using one-time fund balance to cover operating costs, this will allow them an additional year to find solutions that still meet the community's needs.

Summary:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with highlights from the 2015 Executive Budget. Overall, the 2015 budget continues on the path that I laid out when I first ran for office – freezing the levy, reducing debt, making the County run more like a business, job creation and building a stronger community.

I would also like to thank the Brown County Board and Constitutional Officers for their professionalism and willingness to work with me on important issues facing our County.

I would be remiss if I did not thank all of the hardworking and dedicated Brown County employees who make the County successful, and those who have worked tirelessly to help prepare this budget proposal.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy Streckenbach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Troy" being more prominent and the last name "Streckenbach" written in a continuous script.

Troy Streckenbach
Brown County Executive